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[Rodgers, Jessica](#) (2009) "Queer" ... does not have a uniform : articulations of queer identity in Australian queer student activist media. *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 37(1), pp. 57-74.

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““Queer” ... does not have a uniform”¹: Articulations of Queer Identity in Australian
Queer Student Activist Media.

Abstract

This article explores articulations of queer identity in recent Australian queer student media. Print media is of particular importance to queer communities because, as Cover argues, it provides a crucial grounding for community development and a model of queer to guide the positioning of identity and activism. This article uses discourse analysis of queer student activists’ media representations of diversity and inclusiveness to investigate the articulations of queer identity in one specific context: metropolitan Australian universities. This reveals real-life appropriations of this contentious term and contributes to a genealogy of sexuality, documenting one visible moment in history.

Article

Introduction

Thanks to Christy Collis, Chad Parkhill, Rebecca Jennings, Lisa Featherstone and the two anonymous reviewers for feedback and suggestions. Also thanks to Katina Curtis, Ness Rynja and Rodney.

¹ Emma Hughes, ‘Queer Is Not a Performance’ in *Dissent* (Melbourne: Monash University Women’s Affairs Collective, 2003), 26-27.

There is an abundance of research into media representations of queer.² Rob Cover argues that this research primarily targets gay and lesbian representation, stereotyping and visibility in the mainstream mass media.³ There has been some research into gay and lesbian community media.⁴ However, queer student activist media is virtually unstudied. This article thus attends to Australian queer university student activist media in order to reveal some Australian student activists' articulations of queer identity. I examine this issue in a sample of queer student media from 2003 to 2006. Print media is investigated here due to its role in minority community and identity formation. Cover argues that minority media is a significant source for information on sex and sexuality for youth.⁵ James Carey states that minority media can also be a significant force in social organisation and the consumption of this media can contribute to identity development.⁶

² See for example, Fred Fejes and Kevin Petrich, 'Invisibility, Homophobia and Heterosexism: Lesbians, Gays and the Media', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10, no. 4 (1993), 396-422; Rhonda Gibson, 'Coverage of Gay Males, Lesbians in Newspaper Lifestyle Sections', *Newspaper Research Journal* 25, no. 3 (2004), 90-95; Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

³ Rob Cover, 'Re-Sourcing Queer Subjectivities: Sexual Identity and Lesbian/Gay Print Media', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy* 103 (2002), 110.

⁴ Ibid., 111; Rob Cover, 'Engaging Sexualities: Lesbian/Gay Print Journalism, Community Belonging, Social Space and Physical Place', *Pacific Journalism Review* 11, no. 1 (2005), 113.

⁵ Cover, 'Re-Sourcing Queer Subjectivities', 111.

⁶ James Carey, 'The Communications Revolution and the Professional Communicator', in *James Carey a Critical Reader*, ed Catherine A. Warren and Eve Stryker-Munson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 131-132.

Queer student media is a clear example of minority media in which a community works to define itself, making it a rich site for the study of community understandings. The media under examination here is produced by and for queer student activists and aims to reflect the perspectives of this community. I begin this article by contextualising the queer student media that is under examination. This research uses thematic textual analysis, grounded in Foucauldian discourse analysis, to explore understandings of queer identity in student media. In particular, the themes of diversity and inclusivity in queer student activist media and how they point to understandings of queer student activist identity are considered. I demonstrate that queer student media represents diverse understandings of queer, which feature a broad range of identities. I also show that queer student media represents queer identity as inclusive. Queer student media represents queer identity as aiming to involve and account for a broad range of experiences and oppressions. Through the analysis of these themes, this article thus produces a snapshot of the state of queer in contemporary Australia that begins to clarify the application of queer in one context.

Situating Australian Queer Student Activist Media

Queer is a contentious term with many meanings, ranging from a complex deconstructive academic theory to a term for gay in mainstream media. The meanings and uses have been thoroughly debated. In this context queer can be used as an umbrella term to include people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and otherwise queer identifying, which can include a broad range of non-normative sexes, genders and

sexualities (GLBTIQ). However, as this research will demonstrate, queer identity can be understood in a variety of ways.

Queer students are a visible aspect of Australian tertiary communities. Institutionally there are a number of organisations representing and serving Australian GLBTIQ students. There is a National Union of Students (NUS) queer department, two NUS queer officers, an NUS queer mailing list, an annual NUS queer student conference (Queer Collaborations), queer departments and officers in student unions across Australia, designated queer spaces in Australian universities and dozens of queer student publications. Despite these institutional applications, the definition of queer remains unclear and under debate nationally and internationally as has been noted by Nikki Sullivan, Ian Morland and Annabelle Willox, Robert Reynolds, and Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird.⁷ These debates demonstrate the significance of exploring queer student activists' understandings of queer identity. This exploration provides one example of community application and realisation of the concept.

In Western culture sexuality is seen as a natural essence, inherent to one's sense of self.

Michel Foucault's genealogy of sexuality proposes that sexuality is not natural but is in

⁷ Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (Armadale: Circa Books, 2003); Iain Morland and Annabelle Willox, 'Introduction', in *Queer Theory*, ed Iain Morland and Annabelle Willox, *Readers in Cultural Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1-6; Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Remaking the Australian Homosexual* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Nora Giffney and Myra J. Hird, 'Introduction', in *Queering the Non/Human*, ed Nora Giffney and Myra J. Hird (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1-25.

fact a production of power networks.⁸ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Western society, sexual activities, genders and genital configurations that would later be gathered under the umbrella of queerness were viewed as abhorrent, criminal or as a psychological or physical illness.⁹ By presenting sexuality as non-natural, analyses such as Foucault's argue heterosexuality is a construct, rather than a norm to which homosexuality is the other.¹⁰ Using this framework, Judith Butler suggests gender as constructed.¹¹ Discourse is one way that sexuality and gender are deployed.¹² This creates space for homosexuality and other formations of queerness to be viewed as a production of power networks, formulated in discourse, rather than innate illnesses or abnormalities. This perspective, applied to research into queer student activist media,

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1. An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols., vol. 1, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

⁹ Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972); Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1. An Introduction*. It is, of course, still viewed this way by some individuals and institutions.

¹⁰ And others, for example, David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 1990); Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 5, no. 4 (1980), 631-660; Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on The "Political Economy" Of Sex', in *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, ed Rayna R Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (New York: Longman, 1981); Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹² Ibid; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1. An Introduction*.

acknowledges that the understandings of queer that emerge are discursively produced, but does so from the position that sexuality and gender are discursively produced and the product of power networks.

This article is located in a body of historical work that documents formations of queerness.¹³ More specifically, this research contributes to a body of literature on the uptake and application of the term queer by individuals, communities and activists of non-normative sexes, genders and sexualities.¹⁴ It does this by examining how queer identity is represented in Australian queer student activist media. While the majority of research on the deployment of queer focuses on US urban communities in the early 1990s, this article examines an Australian queer student community, which has been subject to little existing research. Greg Jacobs states that ““queer” is a site of ideological

¹³ See for example, Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*; Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*; Susan Driver, ed., *Queer Youth Cultures* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008); Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Avon, 1977); Graham Willett, *Living out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Rebecca Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain: Love and Sex between Women since 1500* (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishers, 2007).

¹⁴ Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Queer Nationality’, *Boundary 2* 19, no. 1 (1992), 149-180; Joshua Gamson, ‘Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct?: A Queer Dilemma’, in *Social Perspectives in Gay and Lesbian Studies*, ed Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (New York: Routledge, 1995), 589-604; Greg Jacobs, ‘The Struggle over Naming: A Case Study of “Queer” in Toronto, 1990-1994’, *World Englishes* 17, no. 2 (1998), 193-201; E. J. Rand, ‘A Disunited Nation and a Legacy of Contradiction: Queer Nation’s Construction of Identity’, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 28, no. 4 (2004), 288-306; Michael Warner, ‘Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet’, *Social Text* 29 (1991), 3-17.

struggle within the lesbian and gay community’: this article documents some of the ideologies grounding that struggle.¹⁵ This examination therefore relates to the aforementioned genealogical approaches that examine sexuality and gender in terms of discourses, rather than innate identities. Jean Carrabine suggests that genealogy can be used to ‘provide a “snapshot” of a particular moment’.¹⁶ In revealing real-life understandings and uses of the term queer, this paper contributes to the genealogy of sexuality and queerness – that is, to the “building up” of the different ways sexuality is constituted ... over time’.¹⁷

In order to contextualise the findings of this paper, I will compare them with applications of queer elsewhere in Australia, in the United States and, to some extent, Canada.

Research on the application of the term queer comes mostly from the US, and applications of the use of the term in US public press have been documented, providing a useful point of comparison.¹⁸ Additionally, as Annamarie Jagose suggests: ‘The overwhelmingly American slant to [her] account indicates the extent to which political developments in North America were influential – and, to a large extent, continue to be –

¹⁵ Jacobs, ‘The Struggle over Naming’, 197.

¹⁶ Jean Carrabine, ‘Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis’, in *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*, ed Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon Yates (London: Sage, 2001), 280.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

¹⁸ CNN.com, ‘The Evolution of “Queer”’ (2003), <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/11/05/offbeat.queer.evolution.ap/index.html>; Jacobs, ‘The Struggle over Naming’; Gabriel Rotello, ‘The Word That Failed’, *The Advocate*, 15 August 2000; David J. Thomas, ‘The “Q” Word’, *Socialist Review* 25, no.1 (1995).

in the development of post-World War II gay and lesbian activism and analysis'.¹⁹ Barry Adam further notes that:

A complex set of socio-economic factors and political possibilities created the crucible in which homosexuality became organised into gay and lesbian subcultures in Western countries. With a shared language, cultural diffusion became an important stimulus for parallel development of the gay world and its movement in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.²⁰

This influence of the US model of gay culture and liberation on Canada also accounts for my use of some comparative Canadian material.²¹ The comparative articles, which feature a variety of definitions of queer and its deployment, provide useful international, historical and community context to my investigation. These findings begin to demonstrate where specific deployments of queer permeate despite temporal, cultural and geographical distance. These comparisons also assist in denoting less common deployments of queer and begin to point to the influences on current Australian queer student activist deployments of the term.

Institutionally Produced Queerness?

¹⁹ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory* (Carlton South, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 34.

²⁰ Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 92.

²¹ Juvonen does, however, highlight the influence of regional specificities on formations of queer community. Tuula Juvonen, 'Queering the Hegemonies of LGBT Historiography', *SQS* 1 (2006), 7-16.

The queer student activism that produces the queer student media under examination here occurs within the institutionally supported environment of university student unions.

Many Australian university student unions have policies that require elected queer officers to represent and organise for queer students. These officers are usually given a budget that funds, among other things, queer student media. This media can be posters, pamphlets, zines, articles in other publications and whole magazines. The form the media takes depends on who is producing it, their financial limitations and the aims of the media. For example, posters may be A4 or A3 black and white photocopies, whereas publications may have up to 40 double-sided pages and be professionally printed with colour inside. University students are commonly aged between eighteen and twenty-four, however, contributors may be post-graduate students or mature age students or not students at all. As queer student media is financially supported, it is free from the editorial constraints that are often associated with media dependant on advertising.²² Queer student media is, however, often subject to the general guidelines of student union publications that promote material free of racism, sexism and homophobia.

The media under examination here is produced in an educated, largely middle-class university environment. In 2006, out of the nearly 984,146 students studying in Australian higher education institutions, 75 per cent were domestic students. 14.5 per cent of these domestic students were from low socio-economic status backgrounds, compared to 25 per cent of the Australian population defined as being from low socio-

²² Lynette Sheridan Burns, *Understanding Journalism* (London: Sage, 2002), 24.

economic status backgrounds.²³ Regarding ethnicity, 1.2 per cent of domestic students were Indigenous Australians; 2.5 per cent of the adult population are Indigenous Australians.²⁴ 3.8 per cent of domestic students were born overseas, had arrived in Australia in the last ten years and spoke a language other than English at home.²⁵ 26 per cent of the Australian population speak a language other than English at home.²⁶ These statistics indicate that while there is some diversity in the socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of enrolled students, there may be a reasonably homogenous, white, middle-class demographic. The demography of the queer student activist communities under investigation would somewhat mirror these statistics, as these communities exist in the same university environment. This context informs the understandings of queer that are produced in queer student media and throughout queer activism.

Analysis of Queer Discourses

Queer university student media is an under-studied subject and, with the presence of queer university student activism and the role this media may play in identity formation and current and future politics, it is crucial to investigate how contemporary Australian student activists understand and use queer, a term that is deployed on a regular basis. This paper conducts a brief discourse analysis of a broad range of queer student media from

²³ Griffith University, 'Student Demographics', Griffith University, http://www.griffith.edu.au/vc/ate/content_he_studentdemogs.html.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Year Book Australia 2008', <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1301.02008?OpenDocument>.

the University of Queensland, University of Technology Sydney, Monash University, the University of Melbourne and three issues of national queer student publication *Querelle*. This media includes zines, magazines, magazine articles, posters and fliers from the period 2003-06. Discourse analysis in this application comes from the European social philosophy and cultural analysis view that attempts to show how institutions, practices and the individual can be understood as produced through the workings of a set of discourses and is used to reveal political dimensions of texts.²⁷ Discourse analysis aids in clarifying the ideologies that inform the struggle surrounding terms of identification in the queer community.

Diversity and inclusiveness are two similar themes present in queer student activist media. Discussions of the diversity of and within the queer community include the multiple issues and experiences that concern particular identities within the queer community. The theme of inclusiveness details the inclusive possibilities which the activists feel that queer can enable and the inclusive nature, or not, of the queer community. Inclusiveness is of key definitional importance to queer as it is commonly deployed with the aim of including those who are not covered by traditional identity terms. It is a particular response to what some activists feel is the exclusive nature of identity politics.

²⁷ Keith. F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Six ed., (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 227; Teun A. Van Dijk, 'The Interdisciplinary Study of News as Discourse', in *The Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, ed Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Nick W. Jankowski (London: Routledge, 1993), 109.

Definitional Inclusiveness of Queer

Queer identity is variously defined throughout queer student media but commonly encompasses a range of identities. One student broadly defines queer as ‘an umbrella term for those who identify but may not be limited to intersex, transgendered, bisexual/polyamorous, same sex/multisex, lesbian/dyke/woman identified woman, gay/poofter/faggot, and/or other culturally marginal sexual self-identifications’.²⁸ In the queer student media examined, the term generally refers to: ‘a broad spectrum of sexualities and genders’; ‘all same sex attracted, transgender and transsexual people’; ‘those questioning their sexuality and/or gender’ and anybody else who doesn’t identify as ‘straight’ or ‘gender normative’ and ‘anyone (hetero, fag, woman, intersex, pansexual, homo, bi, man, boi, trans...) who rejects heterosexuality as the only normal sexual expression’.²⁹ In this queer student media, definitions of queer are similar to those deployed by queer theorists. Academic queer theorist David Halperin also utilises a definition that goes beyond non-normative sexualities and genders, stating:

‘Queer’ ... is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalised because of her or his sexual

²⁸ Lee Barreto, ‘Queer Politics 101’, *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney Queer Collective, 2004), 19.

²⁹ UQ Queer Sexuality Department, ‘Back Cover’, *Queer O’Week Zine ‘05: Out of the Closet, Into the Streets!* (2005), n.p.; Melanie Thomson, ‘Bisexuality and the Trouble with Subsuming’, *Querelle* (2003), 36; Monash University Queer Collective, ‘Who Are These Queers?’ in *Queer 101: Important Stuff* (Victoria: Monash University Queer Collective, 2005), n.p.; Alex Ettling, ‘Pan Update: A Report from Queer Officer Alex Ettling’, *Farrago* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, May 2005), n.p.

practices; it could include married couples without children, for example, or even (who knows?) some married couples *with* children.³⁰

This definitional diversity is central to this deployment of queer. According to some philosophers, queer demarcates an intentional difference from the heteronorm and assimilatory attitude, which emphasises normality.³¹ This assimilatory attitude can also permeate some gay and lesbian activist ideals, and thus in this application queer also formulates a difference to some formations of gay and lesbian identities and politics.

In the queer student media examined, the statement ‘We are ANGRY at those conforming fags, those sell-out liberal lesbians’ could lead one to conclude that ‘conforming fags’ and ‘sell-out liberal lesbians’ are not seen by some activists as part of the Australian queer student activist community.³² Concerns are raised about white middle-class gay males in another student’s article, which states that ‘To be queer, according to popular culture, is to be a gay man (with the exception of one or two lesbians occasionally), white, have a high disposable income, a highly sculpted body, and a healthy mind’.³³ The queer student media examined speaks of mainstream media representation of white, middle-class gay males as disproportionate compared to that of

³⁰ Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, 63, emphasis in original.

³¹ Jonathan Alexander, ‘Beyond Identity: Queer Values and Community’, *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 4, no. 4 (1999), 296.

³² ‘We Are Queer!’, *Querelle* (2003), 46.

³³ David McDonald, ‘Not Quite as Queer as Folk’, *Querelle* (2004), 17.

other queer individuals.³⁴ It also suggests that the middle-class gay male is the primary beneficiary of the pink economy.³⁵ One student notes a dominance of white middle-class queers involved in the campaign for same-sex marriage.³⁶ While white middle-class gay males are not explicitly excluded, some writers raise concerns about their perceived successful integration into heteronormative society. Queer's intentional difference to the norm, as it is represented in some of the above statements, may ground these writers' rejection of what they typify as the white, middle-class gay male who integrates into heteronormative society assisted by the pink economy and broader media representation. This is perhaps one way that some queer student activists interrogate privilege. If one aim of queer is to challenge and interrogate existing societal structures, as Halperin argues it is, then it follows that queer will also question the position of those who benefit from such structures.³⁷ Halperin suggests that in adopting an anti-assimilatory stance, queers are aware of the power structures that marginalise them.³⁸ Such interrogation is occurring in some queer student media's representation of the white, middle-class gay male.

³⁴ 'Why We Don't Need Queer Activism', *Farrago* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union April 2003), 40; Joel Bryant, 'Brokeback Mountain, Different from the Others?', *Querelle* (2006), 2; McDonald, 'Not Quite as Queer as Folk', *Querelle* (2003), 17-18; Nick and Bec L, 'Sexism in the Queer Movement/Community/Scene - Why It Fucking Matters', *Queer O'Week Zine '05: Out of the Closets, Into the Street* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Collective, 2005), n.p.

³⁵ Ranthea Chea, 'Popping Your Cherry for the Pink Dollar', *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney Queer Collective, 2004), 16-17; Nick and Bec L, 'Sexism in the Queer Movement'.

³⁶ Dayvid, 'Same-Sex Marriage and "Gay Rights": A Liberal Debate', *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney Queer Collective, 2006), 35.

³⁷ Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, 62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

Exploration of who is included under the queer umbrella reveals the diversity inherent in queer student activists' definitions of queer identity. To queer student activists, queer can encompass a broad range of sex, gender, sexuality, political and sexual-practice identities.

“‘Queer” (GLBT) Does Not Have a Uniform’

Queer student media often features discussion of the identification of differences between those who regard themselves, or may be regarded, as queer. Internal differences that are represented within queer student media feature gender and sexuality differences, including a range of non-binary gender identities, and race and class. Sexuality differences within the community are spoken about in a broad range of statements and articles that encompass gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer. Pansexuality and heterosexuality are also included.³⁹ The statements ‘muff diving, whip worshipping, arse licking, gender bending punks’ and ‘people who perform practices which challenge heteronormative assumptions of ... desire such as ... bondage and discipline, sadomasochism, and/or autoeroticism, can choose to identify as queer’ speak of differences in practice from

³⁹ ‘Pan Toilets [Pamphlet]’ (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, 2005); *Pan [Zine]* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, 2005); ‘Pan Q&A’, *Pan [Zine]* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, 2005), n.p.; Tallace Bissett, ‘New Dunnies to Be Pansexcellent’, *Farrago* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, March 2005), 33; Kat Bowman, ‘Queer UQ’, *Queer O’Week Zine ‘05: Out of the Closets, Into the Streets* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Collective, 2005), n.p.; Ettling, ‘Pan Update’; Monash University Queer Collective, ‘Who Are These Queers?’, n.p.; UQ Queer Sexuality Department, ‘Glossary of Queer Terms’, *UQ Queer Sexuality Department [Guide]* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Sexuality Department 2004), n.p.

vanilla heterosexual sex.⁴⁰ Some of these also allow for the inclusion of individuals who may be considered heterosexual. The significance of gender differences, as part of queer identity, is evident in articles exploring transgenderism and other non-binary performatives of gender.⁴¹ Representation of gender differences also features in statements that discuss the oppression of women and sexism within the queer community.⁴² In her article, student activist Emma Hughes summarises the differences

⁴⁰ 'We Are Queer!', 46; Barreto, 'Queer Politics 101', 19.

⁴¹ Butler theorises gender and sexuality as performative: Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed D Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991). See for example Tallace Bissett, 'The Case of Lezfest and a Progressive Politics of Difference', *Dissent* (Melbourne: Monash University Women's Affairs Collective, 2003), 32-33; Miles D. Brennan, *The Gender Resource Booklet* (Melbourne: Monash University Queer Collective, 2005); Monash University Queer Collective, 'Who Are These Queers?'; 'Monster Trans', *Pan [Zine]* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Student Union, 2005), n.p.; UQ Queer Sexuality Department, 'Transgender Faqs', *UQ Queer Sexuality Department [Guide]* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Sexuality Department, 2004), n.p.; Norrie-May Welby, 'A Brief Cartoon Guide to Gender and Transgender', *Degree... What Degree?* (Melbourne: Monash University Queer Collective, n.d), n.p.; Chris Brew, 'Jesters or Monarchs? Kings and Queens', *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Queer Collective 2005), 46-47; UQ Queer Sexuality Department, 'Drag Kings', *Queer O'Week Zine '05: Out of the Closet, Into the Streets!* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Sexuality Department, 2005), n.p.; Stuart Watt, 'Genderqueer: A Gay Male Perspective', *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Queer Collective, 2005), 34.

⁴² See for example Hughes, 'Queer Is Not a Performance'; Jaki Leigh, 'It's a Queer Man's World', *Queer Vertigo* (Sydney: University of Technology Queer Collective, 2006), 17; Monash University Queer Collective, 'Why Is There a Wom*n's Hour in the Queer Lounge', in *Queer 101: Important Stuff*

she sees within the queer community by stating that ““queer” (GLBT) does not have a uniform’.⁴³

Some queer student media call attention to experiences and issues that are relevant to specific and differing identities within the queer umbrella. Melanie Thomson addresses the differences between bisexual and homosexual identity, stating that: ‘bisexuals in same-sex relationships deal with the same homophobia that homosexuals deal with. ... However, there are significant differences between bisexual experience of queerness and homosexual experience of queerness’.⁴⁴ Although she discusses similarity in experience, her focus is on difference and she draws attention to the fact that this difference is often forgotten: ‘Even when bisexuality is correctly subsumed under [queer], its commonality with homosexuality is emphasised, while its divergent issues and experiences remain unspoken’.⁴⁵ Former NUS Queer Officer, Tallace Bissett highlights the significance of accounting for differences as part of activism and politics:

That there are parallel issues in the lives of all wom*n, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intersexed, or ‘racialised’ (to be arbitrary about it) is a legitimate basis for political cooperation but the most productive activism does not come out of subsuming other aspects of one’s identity within a particular stream of activism. To the contrary, a richer and

(Melbourne: Monash University Queer Collective, 2005), n.p.; Nick and Bec L, ‘Sexism in the Queer Movement’.

⁴³ Hughes, ‘Queer Is Not a Performance’.

⁴⁴ Thomson, ‘Bisexuality and the Trouble with Subsuming’, 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.

ultimately less oppressive structure is more likely to be the outcome of procedurally sound processes of activism; that is within a politics that takes account of, and respects, multiple differences.⁴⁶

Although she specifically addresses women, her article explores the debates about the inclusion of transsexual women in women's spaces, and thus her arguments could be applied to individual differences within part of the queer community. Student, Belinda Clarke, posits factors other than sexuality and gender identity that differentiate queer people. She states that 'we speak from our own experiences as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people of colour, of working class, as youth, as people of faith and as the oppressed within society'.⁴⁷ Here she also suggests that queer people may be oppressed for reasons other than being queer. She then notes the different contexts where queer struggles may take place: 'Queer people fight daily for well-being and fundamental rights, sometimes even our lives. This occurs within families, schools, faith communities, and society as a whole'.⁴⁸ Writers in queer theory and queer studies document the potential of queer to acknowledge multiple oppressions and identity intersections. Documenting the emergence of queer in Britain and the US, Simon Watney states that 'the up-side of "queer" lies in its ability to articulate the complex, shifting contemporary alignments of class, race, gender, age and sexuality in the lives of individuals who frequently experience multiple oppressions'.⁴⁹ This demonstrates the perceived suitability

⁴⁶ Bissett, 'The Case of Lezfest and a Progressive Politics of Difference', 33.

⁴⁷ Belinda Clarke, 'Queers in the Peace Movement: Solidarity with Minorities', *Querelle* (2003), 35.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Simon Watney, 'Queer Epistemology: Activism, "Outing," and the Politics of Sexual Identities', *Critical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1994), 15-16.

of queer for people of multiple marginalities and that queer itself also acknowledges such intersections. Jacqueline N. Zita states that 'Queerness provides a positionality from which differences, such as class, race, gender, and sexual style, can be further theorised and reevaluated'.⁵⁰ Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli observes a recent 'increasing awareness, activism, research, and policy/programme development in Australia in relation to the multiple marginalities and intersectionalities when "living the rainbow": interweaving gender diversity, cultural diversity and sexual diversity'.⁵¹ Some queer student activist media recognises such multiplicities. If queer definitionally invokes diversity, as suggested by historians Robin Brontsema and Don Kulick, then it perhaps follows that those in queer communities acknowledge the diversity of queer experience.⁵²

Inclusive Struggles

In the queer student media examined, Clarke argues that diverse experiences mean a diverse range of oppressions and struggles to fight:

A queer identity (gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual, transgender...) does not equal being part of a homogenous group. As queer people we should pay attention to oppression and marginalisation based on gender, class, race

⁵⁰ Karen E. Lovaas, John P. Elia and Gust A. Yep, 'Introduction: Shifting Ground(S): Surveying the Contested Terrain of LGBT Studies and Queer Theory', *Journal of Homosexuality* 52, no. 1/2 (2006), 3.

⁵¹ Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, 'Guest Editorial: Presenting a Sampler of How Diversity Is Lived and Loved', *Gay & Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review* 4, no. 1 (2008), 2.

⁵² Robin Brontsema, 'A Queer Revolution: Reconceptualizing the Debate over Linguistic Reclamation', *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 17 (2004), 12; Don Kulick, 'Gay and Lesbian Language', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000), 244.

and disability. A world free of homophobia should also be a world free of sexism, should also be a world free of racism and so on. To ignore these issues will only work towards people continuing to be marginalised in society and in terms of campus activities, alienating queer people from the queer department.⁵³

She suggests that all queer people should acknowledge and fight sexism, racism, classism and ableism, along with oppression based on sexuality and gender. Diversity of experience means recognition of oppression that such difference can bring. Nick and Bec L similarly speak about a diverse community and assert the significance of attending to oppressions other than that experienced by queers, in their zine article: 'Queer liberation cannot come without the liberation of all other oppressed groups, including women; otherwise it is not liberation for queers, only "equality" for gay men'.⁵⁴ For them, liberation for queers is symbiotic with wider societal change. In another zine, Loocy regards the association between forms of oppression as crucial to queer activism: 'As a social movement, Queer ... also links all different kinds of oppression such as class oppression and the dominance of capitalism, oppression of wimmin'.⁵⁵ One statement posits queer liberation as a battle regarding all citizens: 'Queer liberation is a struggle to live in a society that treats all of its citizens fairly, not just equally unfairly'.⁵⁶ Some scholarly literature discussing post-Stonewall gay activism suggests that liberatory

⁵³ Belinda Clarke, 'The Need to Participate', *Farrago*, April 2003, 40.

⁵⁴ Nick and Bec L, 'Sexism in the Queer Movement'.

⁵⁵ Loocy, 'Queer Theory 101', *UQ Queer Sexuality Department [Guide]* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Queer Sexuality Department, 2004), n.p.

⁵⁶ UQ Queer Sexuality Department, 'Back Cover', n.p.

ideologies specified the inclusion of other struggles as part of gay liberation.⁵⁷ Julie Prince states that gay activism in this era set about ‘attacking the institutions of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism for perpetuating heterosexist oppression’.⁵⁸ These scholarly works generally discuss class struggles and feature the notion that all working-class people are similarly oppressed, and that uniting against the capitalist system is the path to freedom. The language employed in the above quotes from queer student media, addressing class oppression and capitalism, suggests a similarly informed understanding of queer liberation. This understanding of queer liberation and the fight against oppression encompasses diverse experiences and a diverse range of oppressions and struggles to fight.

Class diversity is also represented as a point of difference within the queer community, in queer student media. Miles regards the queer community as consisting of a range of classes and cautions that the pink economy can perpetuate the perception of homogeneity within the community.⁵⁹ He states that ‘The queer community is hugely diverse, and our

⁵⁷ Rachel Morgain, ‘Sexual Liberation: Fighting Gay and Lesbian Oppression’, in *Class and Struggle in Australia*, ed R Kuhn (Pearson Education Australia, 2005), 134; Alan Sears, ‘Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?’, *Science & Society: Special Issue Marxist-Feminist Thought Today* 69, no. 1: Special issue (2005), 97; Sharon Smith, ‘Mistaken Identity - or Can Identity Politics Liberate the Oppressed?’, *International Socialism* 62 (1994), n.p.; Colin Wilson, ‘LGBT Politics and Sexual Liberation’, *International Socialism* 114 (2007); Sherry Wolf, ‘The Roots of Gay Oppression’, *International Socialist Review* 37 (2004), 56.

⁵⁸ Julie Prince, ‘This Queer History: An American Synthesis’, *Culture, Society and Praxis* 3, no. 1 (2004), 62.

⁵⁹ Miles, ‘The Pink Dollar’, *Lot’s Wife*, (Melbourne: Monash University Student Union, 2006), n.p.

incomes are similarly diverse’.⁶⁰ The range of class status of queers is again cited in an ironic piece entitled ‘Why We Don’t Need Queer Activism’, which states: ‘Queers are all wealthy, white and middle-class’.⁶¹ The recognition of internal class difference is also present in references to those who are middle-class and suggestions that all queers are not wealthy, white and middle-class.⁶² However, this can also exclude a specific type of queer, as previously mentioned.

The themes of diversity and inclusiveness allow for an examination of queer student activists’ understandings of queer identity and reveal that some queer student activists see the recognition of differences in sexuality, class, race, gender and sex practices as a crucial element of queer and queer identity. Their definitions of queer identity encompass this range of differences. The reflection on community diversity and inclusiveness demonstrates broader trends in the queer student media examined. These signify a dialogue of community reflection in queer student activist media. This is present in the consideration of issues that affect different groups within the community and efforts to be aware of varied forms of oppression. The strong critique of the middle class in media which is produced in a largely middle-class environment perhaps indicates the limits of this reflection.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ ‘Why We Don’t Need Queer Activism’.

⁶² ‘We Are Queer!’, 46; Bryant, ‘Brokeback Mountain, Different from the Others?’, 2-3; Chea, ‘Popping Your Cherry for the Pink Dollar’, 16-17; Dayvid, ‘Same-Sex Marriage and “Gay Rights”: A Liberal Debate’, 12-14; McDonald, ‘Not Quite as Queer as Folk’, 17-18; Nick and Bec L, ‘Sexism in the Queer Movement’.

Comparison of 1990s North American and Australian Queer with Australian Queer Student Media

My analysis of queer student media demonstrates understandings of queer identity similar to those reported in research recounting the early 1990s. Literature around the early 1990s features North American community members describing queer as including ‘bisexual transsexual[s] who mostly sleep with radically gendered people’ and ‘all [that are] here’; and ‘Fag, dyke, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite – all this and more! “Queer” can encompass a lot’.⁶³ The regular explicit inclusion of intersex and heterosexual individuals is not commonly reported in empirical research. However, it could be suggested by the phrase employed by New York-born activist group Queer Nation that defines queer as ‘A Commitment to Radical Sexual Expression and Freedom for Everyone’, and the two encompassing statements mentioned above.⁶⁴

The explicit usage by others beyond the mid-1990s is less widely documented. Ritch C Savin-Williams declares that: ‘The New Gay Teen [is] Shunning Labels’, and he discovered this by undertaking US research that interviewed ‘young women with physical or romantic attractions to women, talking to youths in gay/straight alliances, reading youth stories gathered by others, listening to young people at the annual True Colours conference over the last decade and reading the scientific literature’.⁶⁵ On the

⁶³ David J. Thomas, ‘The “Q” Word’, 77; Jacobs, ‘The Struggle over Naming’, 196.

⁶⁴ Alexander, ‘Beyond Identity: Queer Values and Community’: 296.

⁶⁵ Ritch Savin-Williams, ‘The New Gay Teen: Shunning Labels’, *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* XII, no. 6 (2005), 16.

term queer he states that there 'are those who lament the equation of gay with "queer". The former has been shoved so far to the periphery of mainstream culture that "normal" youths such as themselves are excluded. They're not sexual or political outlaws'.⁶⁶ This demonstrates an understanding of queer that regards it as oppositional to the heteronorm and something associated with a status of intentional difference by relating queer to identifying as a sexual or political outlaw, and being not 'normal'. This shows a similar understanding to that in some Australian queer student activist media.

An opinion piece published in US gay magazine *The Advocate* in 2000 entitled 'The Word that Failed' states:

I have a funny feeling that within a few years '90s queer will join '60s hippie as a phrase that dates people of a certain age. Once that happens, forget it. In the youth-oriented gay world, people won't be able to run away from queer fast enough. And that'll be fine with me.⁶⁷

A review of research into US university GLBT students and their organisational networks suggests that the term queer is not currently widely utilised in a US university institutional context.⁶⁸ Contrary to this a CNN article notes there is some current usage of the term. It states:

⁶⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁷ Gabriel Rotello, 'The Word That Failed', *The Advocate* 817/818, 15 August 2000, 112.

⁶⁸ Brett Beemyn et al., 'Transgender Issues on College Campuses', *New Directions for Student Services* 111 (2005), 49-60; Kerry John Poynter and Jamie Washington, 'Multiple Identities: Creating Community on Campus for LGBT Students', *New Directions for Student Services* 111 (2005), 41-47; Susan R. Rankin, 'Campus Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People', *Diversity Factor* 12, no. 1 (2004),

While some in the gay community began using the word in the last decade or two as an umbrella term for ‘gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered,’ today’s young people say that ‘queer’ encompasses even more. ‘I love it because, in one word, you can refer to the alphabet soup of gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, “heteroflexible,” “omnisexual,” “pansexual” and all of the other shades of difference in that fluid, changing arena of human sexuality,’ says 27-year-old Stacy Harbaugh. ‘I find myself attracted to boy-like girls and girl-like boys,’ Harbaugh adds. ‘If “lesbian” or “bi” doesn’t seem to fit, “queer” certainly does’.⁶⁹

Additionally, an article from *The Advocate* published in 2003 states: ‘The once-pejorative term “queer” has for years been used by the gay community and in pop culture to positively describe things lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender’.⁷⁰ And a brief scan of recent (2006-08) article summaries from *The Advocate* demonstrates further shorthand usage for GLBT or one of these identities.

18-27; Kristin A Renn, ‘LGBT Student Leaders and Queer Activists: Identities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Identified College Student Leaders and Activists’, *Journal of College Student Development* 48, no. 3 (2007), 311-331; Kristin A. Renn and Brent Bilodeau, ‘Queer Student Leaders: An Exploratory Case Study of Identity Development and **LGBT** Student Involvement at a Midwestern Research University’, *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education* 2, no. 4 (2005), 49-71; Robin Ryan, ‘The Evolution of an LGBT Center at a Public Institution’, *New Directions for Student Services: Special Issue: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Research, Policy, and Personal* 111 (2005), 71-74.

⁶⁹ CNN.com, “The Evolution of ‘Queer’,” (7 November 2003),

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/11/05/offbeat.queer.evolution.ap/index.html>.

⁷⁰ Jay Blotcher, ‘No “Queers” Allowed’, *The Advocate* 905 (18 February 2003), 16.

Some documented Australian opinion expresses a hesitance towards the use of queer. Craig Johnston states that ““gay” is now often used as the umbrella term for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders and queers, just as it was in the early 1970s’.⁷¹ He continues, ‘Queer reached its zenith in the Sydney gay and lesbian movements in 1994, but has not managed to win over most gay and lesbian activists’.⁷² Graham Willett notes that queer’s ‘ideas about the fluidity and constructedness of sexuality, for example, are held by remarkably few people’ and that it has had ‘remarkably little impact on the lives of gay and lesbian people or upon society more broadly’.⁷³ In a recent interview, Willett states: ‘I’d still want to be convinced that queer has any resonance outside universities and the inner suburbs. Breaking down the existing structures of gender and sexuality is important – gay liberation and women’s liberation knew that. The emergence of queer was in many ways a return to that broader liberationist agenda. But I don’t see that it has had much impact on society’.⁷⁴ Baden Offord, in his article on Australian GLBT activism, notes debates about the fixity and fluidity of identity but does not discuss them in detail or in relation to queer identity and the use of the label.⁷⁵ This brief summary suggests little uptake of queer in Australia beyond the university networks under investigation.

⁷¹ Craig Johnston, ‘Liberation’s Children’, in *Queer City: Gay and Lesbian Politics in Sydney*, ed Craig Johnston and Paul van Reyk (Annandale: Pluto Press Australia Limited, 2001), 261.

⁷² Ibid., 261.

⁷³ Willett, *Living out Loud*, 263.

⁷⁴ Amy Thomas, ‘Graham Willett (Interview)’, *Querelle* 2008, 22.

⁷⁵ Baden Offord, ‘The Queer(Y)Ing of Australian Public Culture Discourse: Activism, Rights Discourse, and Survival Strategies’, *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 3 (2001), 156.

These comparisons demonstrate similarities in definitions of queer, such as the inclusion of a variety of non-normative sexualities and genders, currently and in the past. However, they also demonstrate that queer student activists' inclusion of intersex and some variations of heterosexuality have been less-commonly included in the deployment of queer in other contexts.

Conclusion

These findings signal attempts throughout queer student media to work towards a diverse and inclusive understanding of queer identity. Queer student media also pays some attention to the limits of queer, defining who is not queer. The analysis illustrates that some Australian queer student activist media represents queer identity as a category that can encompass more than just GLBT and in turn as an identity that recognises the diversity amongst all those it encompasses. The brief comparison with US print media demonstrates that this application is consistent with some historical and contemporary North American applications. It is important to remember that individual and institutional research interests drive what is documented. Further comparison to Western and non-Western countries is crucial to more broadly determine the current applications of queer. This can be done by surveying other research and also by investigating activist groups and social networks.

Queer's contemporary impact and application in Australian university activism constitutes an exciting historical moment in genealogical work on sexuality. This

research provides a snapshot of the discursive construction of queerness in one context. Australian student activist media's constructions of queer identity illustrate community identity formation and the beginnings of reflection. Usage of the term across a national network, like that of Australian queer student activists, appears to be bounded, suggesting limits to its wider applicability. Or, as Willett notes, 'maybe [queer] will find ways to make itself relevant to society more generally'.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Thomas, 'Graham Willett (Interview)', 22.